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ABSTRACT

Since 1976 the Management Board of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training has given top priority to the problem of youth unemployment. Analysis of the employment and training situation among young people showed the emergence of structural deficiencies in vocational training and employment opportunities and the importance of developing an integrated education, training, and employment program for young people. Accordingly, there is a need for change in the relationship between general and vocational training courses in the final years of secondary education and improvement in the range of attractive training and education opportunities during the transition from school to work. Further study has found that short-term schemes prompted by the current economic situation are not enough to eliminate deficiencies. Although positive results have been achieved with work procurement schemes for young people, they should form part of a comprehensive employment program for all workers. Another suggestion is the improvement of cooperation between schools and firms through the development of alternative training. There is a need for a new form of transition from school to work and from work to school; suitable legislation and collective agreements are required. The Centre has been and will continue to examine new avenues including the possibility of developing a form of postsecondary education designed to combat unemployment, finding and improving the link between vocational training and work procurement schemes, determining the role and purpose of training contracts between young employees and firms as a means of increasing training, and investigating the cost of financing training and postsecondary education and the possibility of spreading costs between government and the private secrtor. (KC)

# Youth unemployment and vocational training

## An attempt to summarize the most important conclusions drawn during five years of work on the subject

CEDEFOP

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# Youth unemployment and vocational training

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# An attempt to summarize the most important conclusions drawn during five years of work on the subject

CEDEFOP

Review of activities and results of the Cedefop project 'Youth Unemployment and Vocational Training' drawn up by Burkart Sellin – Cedefop Project Coordinator –

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# I. Growing awareness

Since 1976 the Management Board of the European Centre has given top priority to the problem of youth unemployment when adopting Cedefop work programmes.
This resulted in the first major Cedefop conference on 'Youth unemployment and vocational training', (1) which was held in Zandvoort in December 1976 with the assistance of the Dutch Government. Over 60 participants from the Member States of the Community, the governments, employees' and employers' organizations, and education and vocational training circles exchanged views, proposed solutions and put forward suggestions for further work on the subject. The discussions centred on three areas in particular:

**Occupational choice and motivation of young people** in view of their vocational training and employment prospects in the mid-1970s (2, 3).

Member States' experience with short-term **measures to integrate young people into the labour market** (4), which were for the most part motivated by the current economic situation.

The establishment and implementation of vocational preparation schemes for particularly disadvantaged young people (5).

Cedefop continued to study these aspects and drew a number of important conclusions, which are described below.
Initially, however, attention focused on an analysis of the employment and training situation among young people at the time. Above all, this revealed the structural deficiencies in the range of vocational training and employment opportunities open to young people and the particular difficulties encountered by such problem groups as

Emergence of structural deficiencies in vocational training amd employment opportunities for young people

– girls and women,
– the children of foreign workers and minorities, and
– the handicapped,

in their search for a satisfactory standard of vocational training. These problems were aggravated by regional disparities in the availability of training places and the repercussions for the education system and the labour market as a whole of integration measures designed only for the short term and prompted by the current economic situation.

Even in 1976 it was argued that these short-term measures were more likely to aggravate than alleviate the marginal situation of many young people.

The danger of young people being forced into a marginal situation

The need for educational and training opportunities to be thoroughly overhauled and increased, with account taken of socio-economic conditions in employment, thus became the centre of interest even at this first major Cedefop conference. Problem groups, such as young working people, girls and women, and young foreigners were to receive special attention through positive discrimination in the form of an **integrated education, training and employment programme for young people during their transition from school to work** (6).

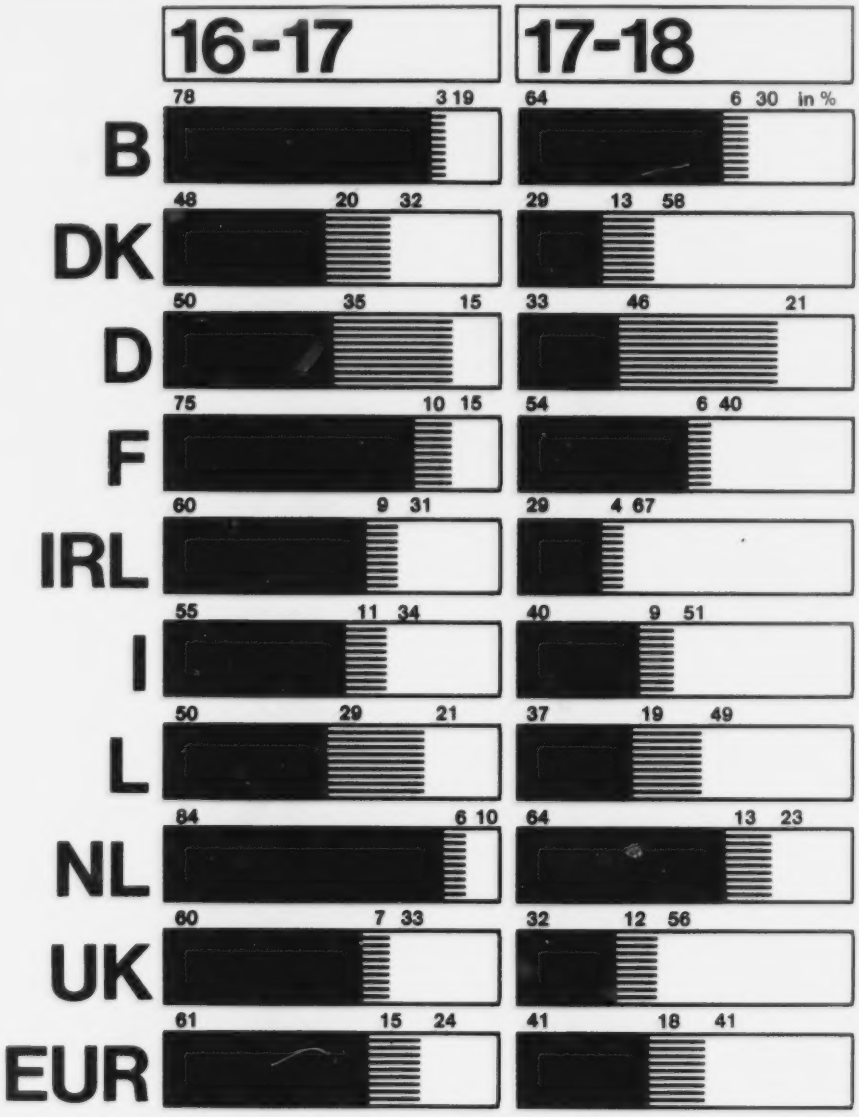
Importance of the development of an integrated education, training and employment programme for young people

Especially when it is impossible to predict accurately how large and how qualified a labour force the economy will require, there should be greater investment in the vocational and initial training of young people, so that they themselves can pave the way for employment with a future.

The situation was made far worse by the demographic trend, which resulted in an increase in the number of young job-seekers in the mid-1970s. There was also an increase in demand for vocational training and employment among women and girls.
Even at that time, however, the dominant view that emerged was that the problem of the transition of young people from school to work was not a temporary one, i.e. it would not simply go away once the economic situation improved. It became apparent that the opportunities for early school-leavers in vocational training and post-secondary education left a great deal to be desired qualitatively and quantitatively, i.e. the cause of the deficiencies was also structural.

Deficiencies in vocational training and post-secondary education opportunities due to structural factors

# Participation in training activities




This comparison shows the effect of the measures for promoting vocational training in the Member States of the European Communities. The training quota for 16-17-year olds in all countries is clearly higher than that of the 17-18-year-olds. These figures for 1978 can be applied to the present day 18-19-year-olds, whereas the picture may now have improved for the 16-17-year-olds.

Key

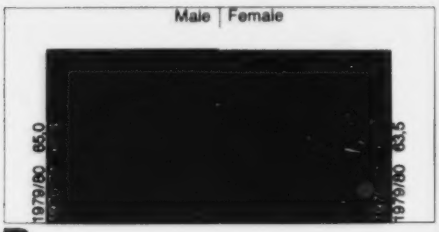
General educational school or vocational training

General educational part-time school or part-time vocational training

Neither general educational nor vocational training

# School attendance

**5 to 24 year-olds in the EC of the Ten in 1970/71 and 1979/80**

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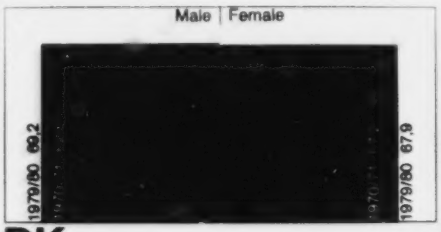


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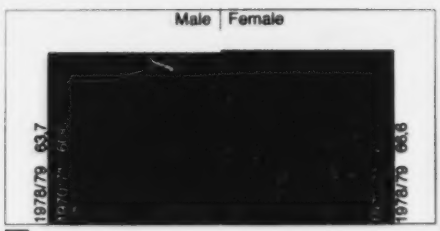


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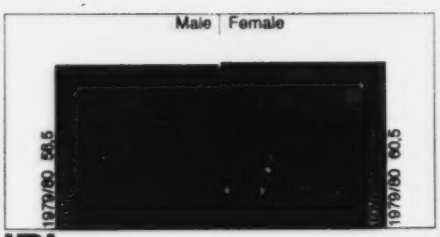


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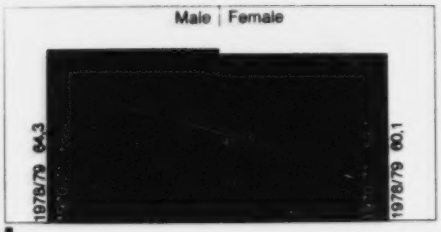


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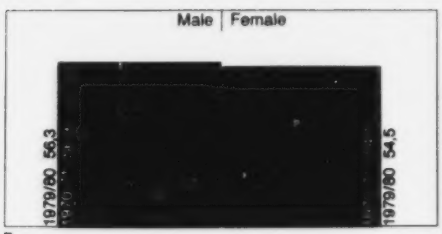


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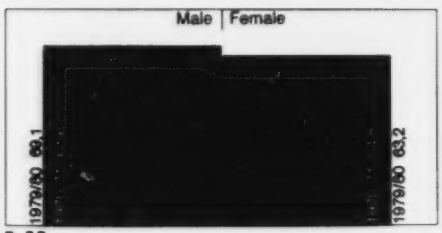


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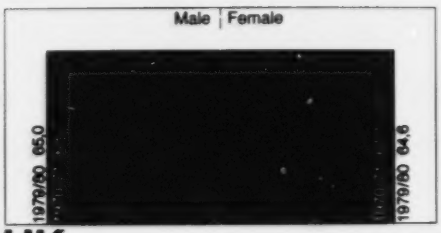


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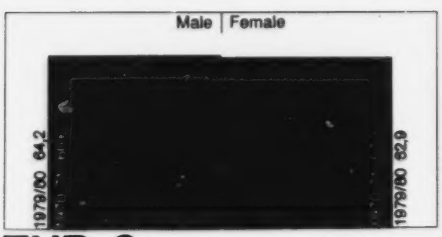


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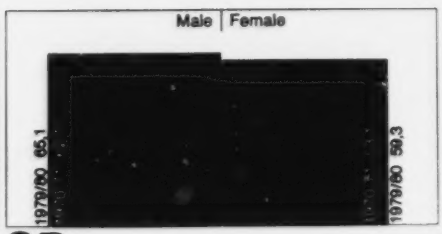


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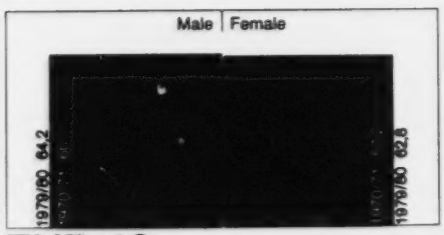


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## male/female

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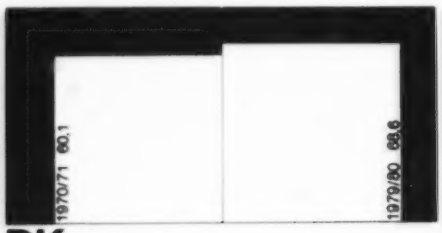


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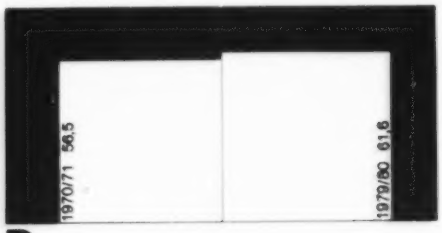


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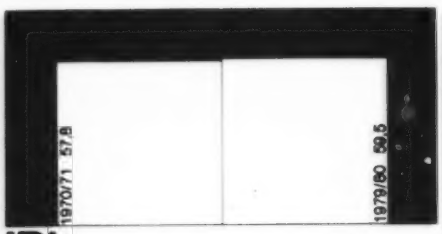


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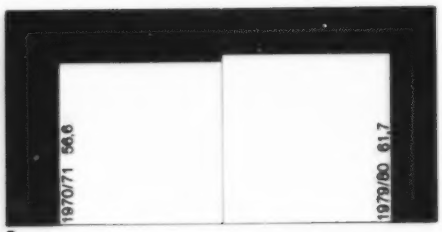


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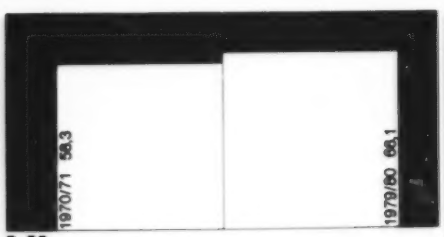


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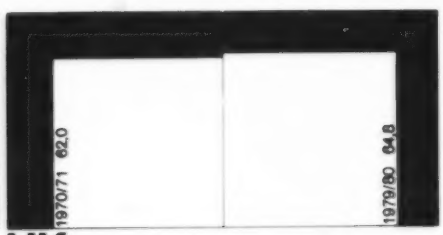


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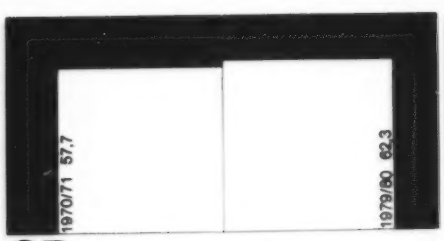


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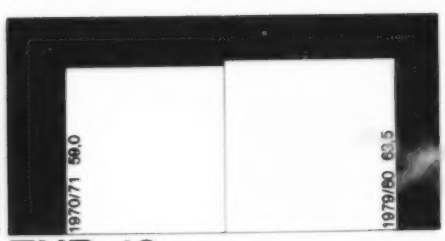


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**total**

# II. Structural range and individual attitudes

The extensive studies carried out by Cedefop following the Zandvoort conference at both national and Community level on the subject of occupational choice and motivation of young people in view of their training and employment prospects revealed the adverse effects of unsatisfactory vocational training opportunities on the target group in general and on the problem groups, girls and women and foreign workers in particular (2, 3).

A possibly low level of work and occupational motivation among young people could not therefore be generally regarded as an independent variable, i.e. dependent only on the attitudes of young people themselves, but must be related to the background of deficient training and employment opportunities.

Problem groups forced to take jobs in the weaker sectors of the labour market

It was found that young school-leavers, and the whole of the problem group in particular, are for the most part forced to take jobs in the weaker sectors of the labour market (firms and sectors which are highly sensitive to economic trends, mono-production systems, retail and traditional craft firms often requiring labour for short periods), where they encounter working conditions in which they cannot obtain a comprehensive initial training or hope for permanent employment.

Structural and economic factors also resulted in a decline in the number of training places for apprentices until the mid-1970s. Although the situation then improved somewhat in various Member States, the range of opportunities remained inadequate in most, particularly where too little account is taken in the formal education system, for example, of the needs of vulnerable young people and problem groups. This is aggravated by the fact that most education systems take a greater interest in pupils who are preparing for a university education. They consequently pay little attention to preparing the pupil for entry into working life. This reveals the need for a change in the relationship between general and vocational training courses in the final years of secondary education. It became generally clear that training opportunities must be adapted to young people's needs rather than vice versa, which also means that the aim should be less to change young people's attitudes than to change the attitudes of the institutions and adults concerned with young people. Certain attitudes among young people are always a reaction to attitudes among adults. Too little or misplaced interest in the needs of young people can only increase the lack of sympathy adults feel for certain attitudes among young people. The studies also showed, however, that the majority of young people are definitely interested in vocational training and post-secondary education, i.e. in improving themselves socially and economically, but that they have been unable to achieve this objective because of the shortage of satisfactory training and employment opportunities. Many young people therefore succumb to a feeling of resignation, drop out of society or become a potential source of protest and unrest, unwilling to accept the poor prospects the future holds for them. Education and training opportunities alone can now do little to help many young people in this category however. What they need is direct social and material assistance from society and adults accompanied by information and the creation of worthwhile or permanent and creditable jobs.

The need for change in the relationship between general and vocational training courses in the final years of secondary education

This is not to say, however, that it is less important to improve and increase the range of attractive training and education opportunities, since in the medium and long term this will prevent a further deterioration of the situation by postponing the time at which young people begin to look for employment and in particular by ensuring that most of them approach the labour market with adequate vocational preparation and training.

The need to improve and increase the range of attractive training and education opportunities during the transition from school to work

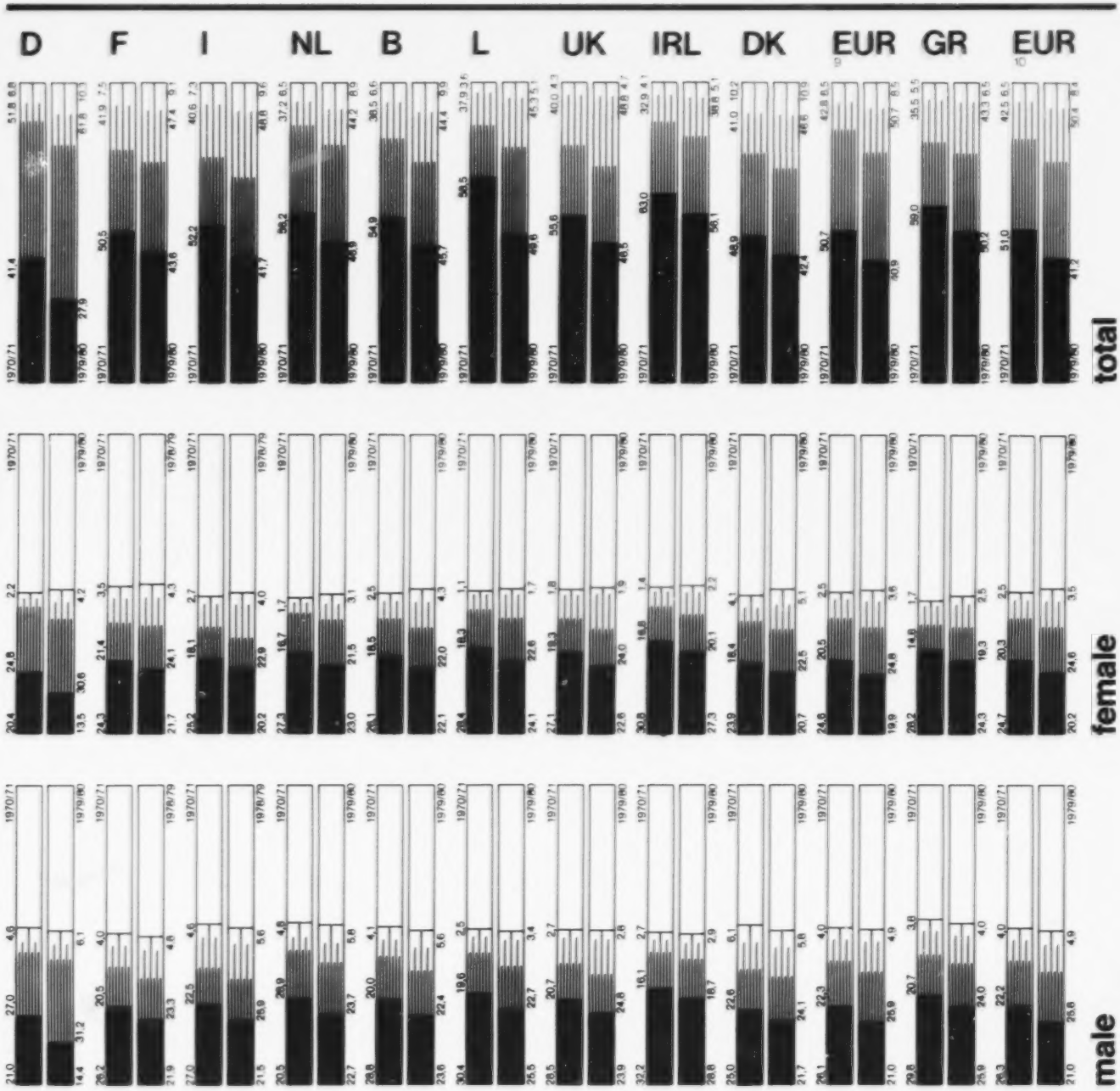
It does seem, however, that because of the present structure of the formal education systems, which place the emphasis on other than vocationally oriented learning, merely increasing the schoolleaving age beyond the tenth year of education cannot help these young people either, especially as many of them want to make their way in working life from an early age.

This conclusion prompted a number of other suggestions, which will be discussed below.

A low level of motivation is always a reaction to unsatisfactory training and employment opportunities

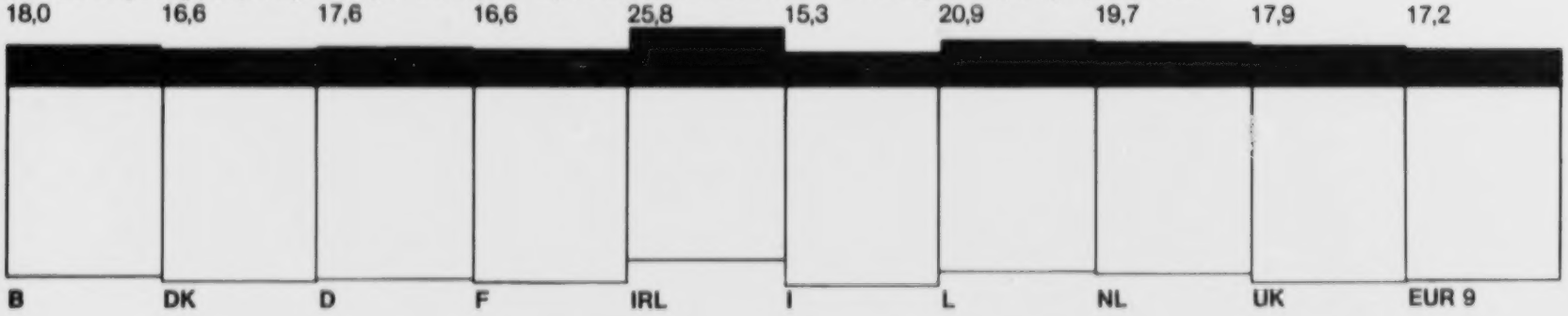
# School attendance by school levels

in the EC of the Ten

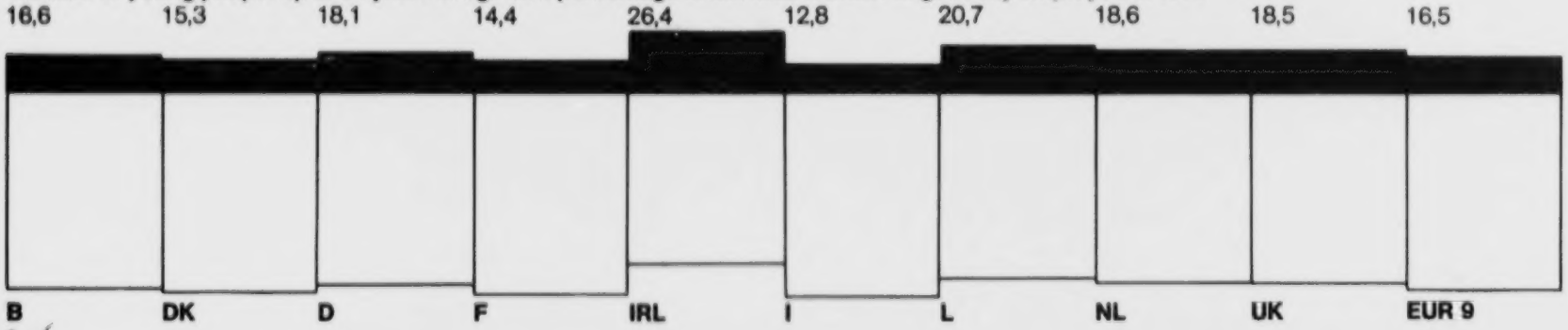


The chart compares the percentage of 14 to 24 year-olds amongst the gainfully employed and unemployed persons for the years 1977 and 1979. The figures show that this age group is disproportionately affected by unemployment. The percentage of young people amongst the gainfully employed is roughly the same in all the Member States of the European Communities (with the exception of Ireland), i.e. below 20%, showing, if anything, a slightly declining tendency. However, on a European average, young people account for more than 40% of the unemployed and this figure is increasing. Here the figures for the individual EC Member States differ considerably.

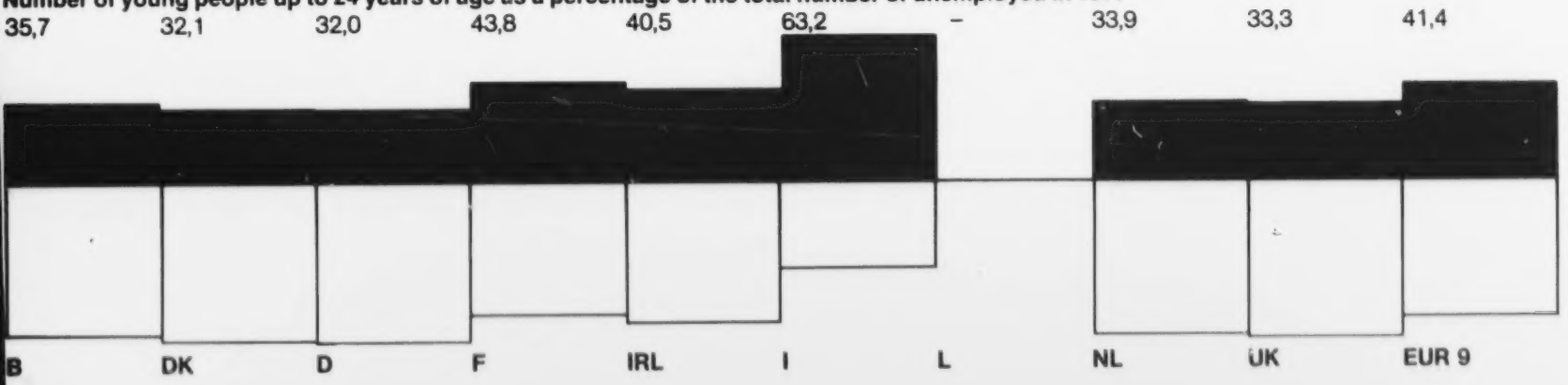
**Number of young people up to 24 years of age as a percentage of the total number of gainfully employed in 1977**



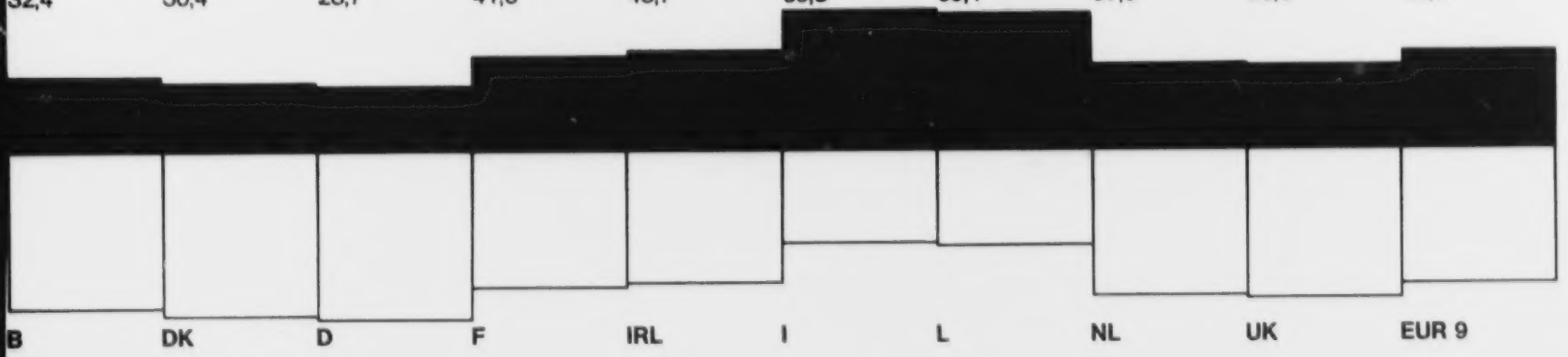

**Number of young people up to 24 years of age as a percentage of the total number of gainfully employed in 1979**



**Number of young people up to 24 years of age as a percentage of the total number of unemployed in 1977**




**Number of young people up to 24 years of age as a percentage of the total number of unemployed in 1979**



# III. State action to combat youth unemployment

The schemes introduced in the mid-1970s and subsequently improved by the Member States to combat youth unemployment, in the form of:

- job procurement schemes,
- labour cost subsidies and training grants,
- vocational preparation schemes,
- integration aids to young people,

and special training efforts by the State and the private sector were carefully analysed by the Centre and assessed to see whether they might:

a) also improve the employment prospects of young people in the longer term, and

b) not possibly have an adverse effect on the standard range of training and employment opportunities open to young people (4, 6).

Short-term schemes prompted by the current economic situation are not enough to eliminate deficiencies

It was found that young people's employment prospects were not on the whole improved by such schemes, i.e. although they kept young people off the streets in the short term and gave them some temporary financial and social support, the value of which should not, of course, be overlooked, they had little positive effect in the longer term because they were usually conceived as short-term programmes.

The danger of many young people being forced into a marginal situation by special schemes which are not integrated into the standard range

The second question was and remains more difficult to answer. In some Community countries, where vocational training was traditionally available to only a small proportion of the age group concerned, there was little evidence of its being adversely affected. However, in countries with a comprehensive standard range of training and employment opportunities, such special schemes tended to aggravate the marginal position of many young people who were unemployed or were threatened with unemployment. A consistent effort was made at a relatively early stage in such cases to integrate these schemes into the 'standard' range to avoid too distinct a line being drawn between the various possible target groups of the schemes and to prevent their forming a marginal or residual group.

Positive results achieved with work procurement schemes for young people. But they should form part of a comprehensive employment programme for all workers

The Member States with a limited range of vocational training opportunities, which generally have a higher rate of unemployment among young people than the other Member States, have only recently begun to improve and expand the range, with account taken of experience so far gained with the special schemes.

The information collected on employment opportunities has not been encouraging, either. But this is more likely to be due to the trend in the general economic and employment situation in the late 1970s than to the quality or the side-effects of employment and integration measures for young people. On the whole, work procurement schemes appear to have produced the best results where young people had already had some vocational preparation and/or training. On the other hand, they do not seem to have made it much easier for young people with the lowest qualifications to find work, especially as they were concentrated on sectors which did not offer prospects of long-term employment (community projects which may not compete with private-sector firms).

Work procurement schemes for young people should therefore form part of a comprehensive employment programme for all workers because of the effect they have of setting young people apart from other categories of worker, although there should be discrimination in favour of problem groups in schemes of this kind. They are then more likely to prove really successful over a longer period.

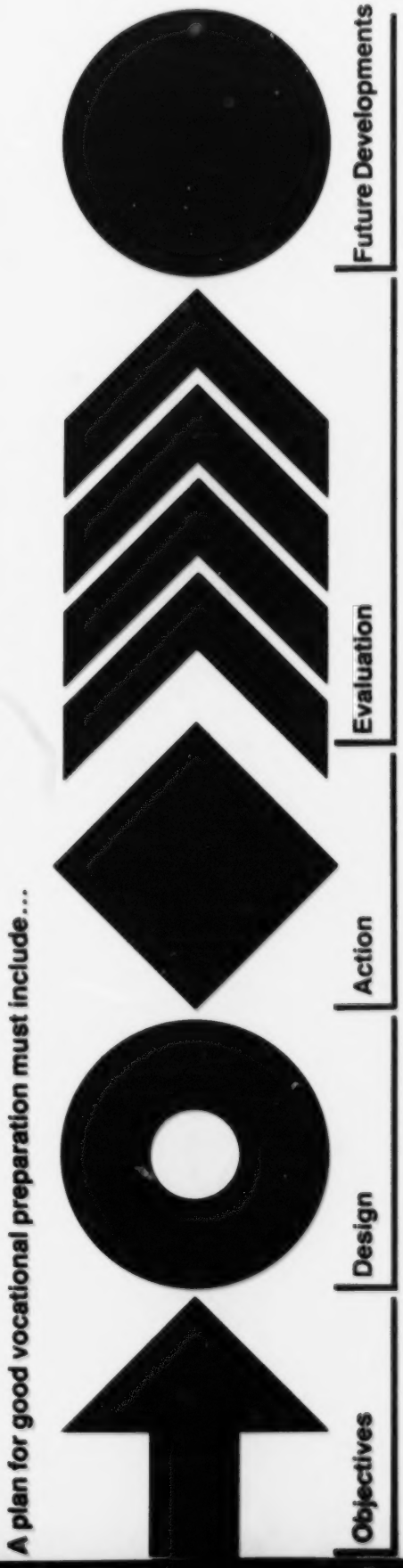
Doubtful status of young people in in-firm training and work experience programmes

All too many work procurement schemes at present take the form of simple infirm training or work experience programmes in which the person concerned has a doubtful status in a grey area between full employee and trainee, which is again more likely to place many young people in a marginal position than to lead to their integration (see also Section VI, Background conditions).

Like the studies of the motivation of young people, the analysis of State schemes thus pointed to the need for the development of an integrated programme for their education, training and employment, with the training and employment programmes for young people particularly at risk forming part of the standard range of opportunities.

# Alternance as initial vocational training and further education

# IV. Encouragement of individual projects




The schemes referred to in Section III gave rise to a wide range of individual vocational promotion, training and preparation projects for young people in all the Member States. The value of their contribution to facilitating the transition from school to work cannot be overemphasized.

The Centre felt the need for an exchange of views and information to permit mutual evaluation of these projects, many of which have been developed and implemented by private organizations or individuals or local authorities. To this end, a number of projects for the vocational preparation of unemployed young people in vrious countries were observed and meetings of project leaders and the government officials responsible for the financing and supervision of the projects were organized (5).

Short-term nature of many projects detracts from their success

The many good intentions and achievements were offset, however, by the fact that most of the projects were short-term and were therefore constantly fighting for survival, which often meant their being unable to devote the necessary attention to their real target group, young people. These circumstances very soon assumed far greater significance than the projects themselves, however well and effectively designed and implemented they may have been. None the less, all concerned, including the Centre, were able to glean much useful information on the nature and content of good vocational preparation measures from the analysis of such projects. This revealed the importance of transferring these findings to the standard range of training and employment opportunities for young people particularly at risk.

# V. Integrated education, training and employment programmes for young people

Improvement of cooperation between schools and firms through the development of alternance training

The first and arguably the most significant initiative so far taken by the European Community in the development of an integrated education/training and employment programme for young people, in which the findings described above were also used, was the Council resolution of December 1979 on the alternant training of young people.

One aim has always been both to increase the range of training opportunities for young people during their transition from school to work and to improve the quality of these opportunities, starting with the deficiencies in present apprenticeship training in the Member States and the experience gained with short-term vocational preparation and integration measures. The Centre has contributed to this subject and its development in several ways. In June 1980 it organized a conference to offer the Member States assistance with the implementation of the concept or, with the help of experts from the Member States, to decide what assistance might be provided (7).

Cedefop also published a special edition of its bulletin, in which it reported on measures already taken in the Member States (8). In addition, a guide has been developed to provide those responsible for vocational training with practical aids to decision-making (9).

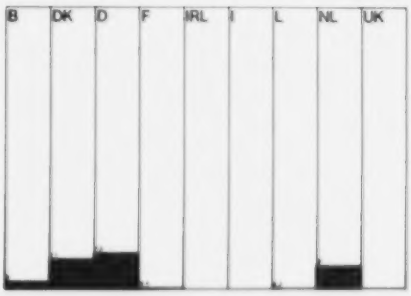
Lack of information on the social and material standing of young people during transition from school to work

In close collaboration with the Commission of the European Communities, Cedefop has itself undertaken a study of the social and material standing of young people under present legislation and collective labour agreements. The studies that have been made (10-17) have also produced information of importance for the whole target group. They reveal the need, for example, for existing means of providing material assistance to be integrated, wherever possible, into an overall concept of educational and training promotion for all young people in the various situations they face during the transition from school to work. This will entail the development of an integrated range of assistance for schoolchildren, apprentices, young people involved in integration measures, university students and unemployed young people. In the final years of secondary education in many countries the assistance given to schoolchildren, who could not stay at school without it, is lacking, and this is also true of in-school training opportunities in many cases (18).

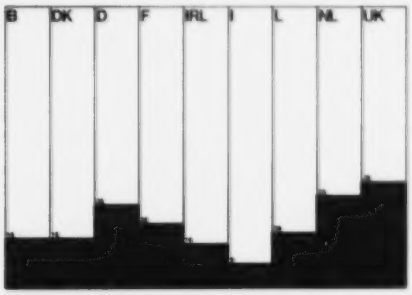
The need for the development of an overall concept of educational and training promotion

Another important conclusion was that training contracts between firms and (young) employees should have a legal basis and should satisfy certain general requirements. It was also felt that a clearer distinction should be made between work procurement schemes and education or training measures in order to eliminate the grey area in which persons involved in in-firm training or work experience programmes could not be regarded as either trainees or full employees (18).

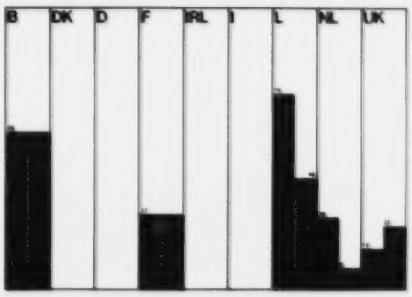
Efforts to achieve the equal treatment of schoolchildren, trainees and students



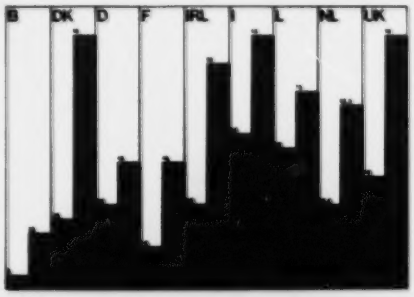

**Secondary-school pupils**
Maximum grants and aids for pupils at upper secondary level and living at home, as a percentage of the average industrial wage in 1979/80




**University students**
Maximum grants and aids for students not living at home, as a percentage of the average industrial wage in 1979/80




**Unemployed school-leavers**
Promotion aids for 16 to 17-year-olds as a percentage of the average industrial wage 1979/80




**Apprentices**
Initial and final remunerations as a percentage of wage for an adult

# VI. Background conditions

Activities to date clearly show that satisfactory vocational training is also dependent on a satisfactory employment and economic situation. It can make only a very limited contribution to its own improvement.

The need for a new form of transition from school to work and from work to school: suitable legislation and collective agreements are required

However, it has also become clear that there is a need for a new form of transition both from school to work and from work back to school (for older workers) and that this need extends beyond the present employment situation.

The redistribution of work between young people and adults and the problems connected with the (re)integration of women and migrant workers or certain categories of foreigners indicate the need for an integrated programme of education and post-secondary education for young people **and** adults. Suitable legislation and collective agreements on this aspect are required as a matter of urgency in most Member States. The Community should establish a number of general principles, encourage positive developments with its financing instruments and so prevent competition in the economy from assuming excessive prominence over working conditions and the distribution of work. This is the area in which well coordinated development in the Member States is most likely to succeed, especially as the problems and imbalances referred to are very similar. This might have repercussions for other areas of social and employment policies, to which greater importance may well be attached in the near future compared with the Community's economic and competition policies in view of the increasing gravity of the employment situation.

# VII. Open questions

If general principles are to be established, a number of areas may well need to be submitted to a thorough examination.
The Centre has already begun its studies of some of these areas and will probably examine others in 1982:

- the possibility of developing a form of post-secondary education designed to combat unemployment;
- the link between vocational training and work procurement schemes and the advantages and disadvantages of a closer link;
- the role and purpose of training contracts between (young) employees and firms as a means of increasing the number of training places;
- supervision of alternant training projects receiving European Social Fund aid;
- the labour withdrawal effect of a possible extension of schemes to allow employees leave for educational or training purposes;

and last but not least

- the cost and financing of vocational training and post-secondary education, the apportionment of costs between the State and the private sector and among firms, public and private bodies, etc. providing varying levels of training.

# VIII. Publications by the Centre on youth unemployment and vocational training 1976-81

(1) **Youth unemployment and vocational training**
**A conference report,** 1977, 268 pp.
Available in: EN, FR
out of print: DE

(2) **Occupational choice and motivation of young people, their vocational training and employment prospects. Surveys on Member States of the European Communities**
805 pp.
Available in: DE, EN
out of print: FR

(3) **Occupational choice and motivation of young people, their vocational training and employment prospects**
Synthesis report on the situation in the European Communities – 1980, 250 pp.
Available in: DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL
Price: UKL 5.30, USD 12, IRL 5.90
ISBN 92-825-1515-X

(4) **Emergency measures for the employment and training of young people in the European Community**
A documentation, 1978, 215 pp.
Available in: DE, EN, IT
out of print: FR

(5) **Vocational preparation of unemployed young people,** 1980, 160 pp.
Available in: DE, EN, FR
EN ISBN 92-825-1769-1

(6) **Vocational training Bulletin No 2-3/78**

(7) **Youth unemployment and alternance training in the EEC**
Conference report, 1981, 244 pp.
Available in: DE, EN, FR
Price: IRL 3.70, UKL 2.90, USD 6.25
ISBN 92-825-2265-2

(8) **Vocational training Bulletin**
Special edition No 4/1980
Linking work and training for young persons in the European Community

(9) **Alternance training for young people: Guidelines for action**
(forthcoming)
Available in: DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL

(10) **Chômage des jeunes et formation professionnelle Statut matériel et social des jeunes lors du passage de l'école à la vie active en Belgique,** 1980, 109 pp.
Available in: FR
Price: IRL 3, UKL 2.60, USD 6.20
ISBN 92-825-2084-6

(11) **Jugendarbeitslosigkeit und Berufsbildung Sozialer und materieller Status von Jugendlichen beim Übergang von der Schule zum Beruf in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,**
1980, 184 pp.
Available in: DE
Price: DM 16,20
ISBN 92-825-1741-1

(12) **Chômage des jeunes et formation professionnelle Statut matériel et social des jeunes lors du passage de l'école à la vie active en France,** 1980, 119 pp.
Available in: FR
Price: IRL 3, UKL 2.60, USD 6.20
ISBN 92-825-1743-8

(13) **Youth unemployment and vocational training The material and social standing of young people during transition from school to work in Ireland,** 1980, 125 pp.
Available in: EN
Price: IRL 3, UKL 2.60, USD 6.20
ISBN 92-825-1976-7

(14) **Disoccupazione giovanile e formazione professionale Condizioni materiali e sociali dei giovani durante la transizione dalla scuola al lavoro in Italia,** 1980, 172 pp.
Available in: IT
Price: IRL 3, UKL 2.60, USD 6.20
ISBN 92-825-2060-9

(15) **Jeugdwerkloosheid en beroepsopleiding De sociale en materiele status van jongeren bij de overgang van school naar werk in Nederland,** 1980, 87 pp.
Available in: NL
Price: IRL 3, UKL 2.60, USD 6.20
ISBN 92-825-1921-X

(16) **Youth unemployment and vocational training The material and social standing of young people during transition from school to work in the United Kingdom,**
1980, 75 pp.
Available in: EN
Price: IRL 3, UKL 2.60, USD 6.20
ISBN 92-825-1975-9

(17) **Youth unemployment and vocational training The material and social standing of young people during transition from school to working life**
Synthesis report, 1981, 204 pp.
Available in: DE, EN, FR
Price: IRL 6, UKL 4.80, USD 9,20
ISBN 92-825-2041-2

(18) **Youth unemployment and vocational training The material and social standing of young people during transition from school to working life**
Conference report, 1981, 20 pp.
Available in: DA, DE, EN, FR, IT, NL

(19) **Youth unemployment and vocational training**
Publications in the EC Member States Selected bibliography
1980, 285 pp.
Available in: DE, EN, FR
EN ISBN 92-825-1772-1

(20) **Planning vocational preparation initiatives for unemployed young people**
1982, 149 p.
Language EN
Price: ECU 2.40,
UKL 1.30, IRL 1.70, USD 2.90
ISBN 82-825-2402-7

**Abbreviations:** DA = Danish
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